The facility of treating actions or events in the pastoral stile has incited many writers, from whom more judgment might have been expected, to put the sorrow or the joy which the occasion required into the mouth of Daphne or of Thyrsis, and as one absurdity must naturally be expected to make way for another, they have written with an utter disregard both of life and nature, and filled their productions with mythological allusions, with incredible fictions, and with sentiments which neither passion nor reason could have dictated, since the change which religion has made in the whole system of the world.

Numb. 38. Saturday, *July* 28, 1750.

Auream quisquis mediocritatem
Diligit, tutus caret obsoleti
Sordibus tecti, caret invidendâ
Sobrius aulâ.

Hor.

Among many fanciful parallels which men of more imagination than experience have drawn between the natural and moral state of the world, it has been observed that

that happineſs as well as virtue conſiſts in mediocrity; that it is neceſſary, even to him who has no other care than to paſs through the preſent ſtate with eaſe and ſafety, to avoid every extreme; and that the middle path is the road of ſecurity, on either ſide of which, are not only the pitfals of vice, but the precipices of ruin.

Thus the maxim of Cleobulus the Lindian, μέτρον ἄριστον, *Mediocrity is beſt*, has been long conſidered as an univerſal principle, extended through the whole compaſs of life and nature. The experience of every age ſeems to have given it new confirmation, and to ſhew that nothing, however ſpecious or alluring, is to be perſued with propriety, or enjoyed with ſafety, beyond certain limits.

Even the gifts of nature, which may truly be conſidered as the moſt ſolid and durable of all terreſtrial advantages, are found, when they exceed the middle point, to be no very certain cauſes of felicity, but to draw the poſſeſſor into many calamities, eaſily avoided by others that have been leſs bountifully enriched or adorned. We ſee every day women periſhing with infamy, by having been too will-

ing to ſet their beauty to ſhow, and others, though not with equal guilt or miſery, yet with very ſharp remorſe, languiſhing in decay, neglect, and obſcurity, for having rated their youthful charms at too high a price. And, indeed, if the opinion of Bacon be thought to deſerve much regard, very few ſighs would be vented for eminent and ſuperlative elegance of form; "for beautiful women," ſays he, "are ſeldom of any great accompliſhments, "becauſe they, for the moſt part, ſtudy be-"haviour rather than virtue."

Health and vigour, and a happy conſtitution of the corporeal frame, are, to a common degree, of abſolute neceſſity to the enjoyment of the comforts, and to the performance of the duties of life, and requiſite in yet a greater meaſure to the accompliſhment of any thing illuſtrious or diſtinguiſhed; yet even theſe, if we can judge by their apparent conſequences, are ſometimes not very beneficial to thoſe on whom they are moſt liberally beſtowed. They that frequent the chambers of the ſick, will generally find the ſharpeſt pains, and moſt ſtubborn maladies among them whom confidence of the force of nature formerly betrayed to negligence and irregularity; and

and that superfluity of strength, which was at once their boast and their snare, has often, in the latter part of life, no other effect than that it continues them long in impotence and anguish.

These gifts of nature are, however, always blessings in themselves, and to be acknowledged with gratitude to him that gives them; since they are, in their regular and legitimate effects, productive of happiness, and prove pernicious only by voluntary corruption, or idle negligence. And as there is little danger of persuing them with too much ardour or anxiety, because no skill or diligence can hope to procure them, the uncertainty of their influence upon our lives is mentioned, not to depreciate their real value, but to repress the discontent and envy to which the want of them often gives occasion in those who do not enough suspect their own frailty, nor consider how much less is the calamity of not possessing great powers, than of not using them aright.

Of all those things that make us superior to others, there is none so much within the reach of our endeavours as riches, nor any

thing more eagerly or conſtantly deſired. Poverty is an evil always in our view, an evil complicated with ſo many circumſtances of uneaſineſs and vexation, that every man is ſtudious to avoid it. Some degree of riches is therefore required, that we may be exempt from the gripe of neceſſity; when this purpoſe is once attained, we naturally wiſh for more, that the evil which is regarded with ſo much horror may be yet at a greater diſtance from us; as he that has once felt or dreaded the paw of a ſavage, will not be at reſt till they are parted by ſome barrier, which may take away all poſſibility of a ſecond attack.

To this point, if fear be not unreaſonably indulged, Cleobulus would, perhaps, not refuſe to extend his mediocrity. But it almoſt always happens, that the man who grows rich changes his notions of poverty, ſtates his wants by ſome new meaſure, and from flying the enemy that perſued him, bends his endeavours to overtake thoſe whom he ſees before him. The power of gratifying his appetites encreaſes their demands; a thouſand wiſhes croud in upon him importunate to be ſatisfied, and vanity and ambition open proſpects to de-

ſire

fits, which still grow wider, as they are more contemplated.

THUS in time want is enlarged without bounds; an eagerness for increase of possessions deluges the soul, and we sink into the gulphs of insatiability, only because we do not sufficiently consider, that all real need is very soon supplied, and all real danger of its invasion easily precluded; that the claims of vanity, being without limits, must be denied at last; and that, perhaps, the pain of repressing them is less pungent before they have been long accustomed to compliance.

WHOSOEVER shall look heedfully upon those who are eminent for their riches, will not think their condition such as that he should hazard his quiet, and much less his virtue to obtain it. For all that great wealth generally gives above a moderate fortune, is more room for the freaks of caprice, and more privilege for ignorance and vice, a quicker succession of flatteries, and a larger circle of voluptuousness.

THERE is one reason seldom remarked which makes riches less desirable. Too much

wealth is very frequently the occaſion of poverty. He whom the wantonneſs of abundance has once ſoftened, very eaſily ſinks into neglect of his affairs; and he that thinks he can afford to be negligent, is not far from being poor. He will ſoon be involved in perplexities, which his inexperience will render unſurmountable; he will fly for help to thoſe whoſe intereſt it is that he ſhould be more diſtreſſed, and will be at laſt torn to pieces by the vulturs that always hover over fortunes in decay.

When the plains of India were burnt up by a long continuance of drought, Hamet and Raſchid, two neighbouring ſhepherds, faint with thirſt, ſtood at the common boundary of their grounds, with their flocks and herds panting round them, and in extremity of diſtreſs prayed for water. On a ſudden the air was becalmed, the birds ceaſed to chirp, and the flocks to bleat. They turned their eyes every way, and ſaw a being of mighty ſtature advancing through the valley, whom they knew upon his nearer approach to be the Genius of diſtribution. In one hand he held the ſheaves of plenty, and in the other the ſabre of deſtruction. The ſhepherds ſtood trembling,

bling, and would have retired before him; but he called to them with a voice gentle as the breeze that plays in the evening among the ſpices of Sabæa; "Fly not from your bene-"factor, children of the duſt! I am come to "offer you gifts, which only your own folly "can make vain. You here pray for water, "and water I will beſtow; let me know "with how much you will be ſatisfied: ſpeak "not raſhly; conſider, that of whatever can "be enjoyed by the body, exceſs is no leſs "dangerous than ſcarcity. When you re-"member the pain of thirſt, do not forget "the danger of ſuffocation. Now, Hamet, "tell me your requeſt."

"O Being, kind and beneficent," ſays Hamet, "let thine eye pardon my confuſion. "I entreat a little brook, which in ſummer "ſhall never be dry, and in winter never "overflow." "It is granted," replies the Genius; and immediately he opened the ground with his ſabre, and a fountain bubbling up under their feet ſcattered its rills over the meadows; the flowers renewed their fragrance, the trees ſpread a greener foliage, and the flocks and herds quenched their thirſt.

THEN turning to Rafchid, the Genius invited him likewife to offer his petition. "I "requeft, fays Rafchid, that thou wilt turn "the Ganges through my grounds, with all "his waters, and all their inhabitants." Hamet was ftruck with the greatnefs of his neighbour's fentiments, and fecretly repined in his heart, that he had not made the fame petition before him; when the Genius fpoke, "Rafh "man, be not infatiable! remember, to thee "that is nothing which thou canft not ufe; "and how are thy wants greater than the "wants of Hamet?" Rafchid repeated his defire, and pleafed himfelf with the mean appearance that Hamet would make in the prefence of the proprietor of the Ganges. The Genius then retired towards the river, and the two fhepherds ftood waiting the event. As Rafchid was looking with contempt upon his neighbour, on a fudden was heard the roar of torrents, and they found by the mighty ftream that the mounds of the Ganges were broken. The flood rolled forward into the lands of Rafchid, his plantations were torn up, his flocks overwhelmed, he was fwept away before it, and a crocodile devoured him.